

IN THE CLAIMS

The following claim set replaces any prior versions of the claims.

1 1. (withdrawn) A method for making a tunnel valve head with a flux
2 guide, comprising:

3 forming a tunnel valve at a first shield layer, the tunnel valve
4 comprising a free layer distal to the first shield layer;

5 depositing a first insulation layer over the first shield layer and around
6 the tunnel valve;

7 depositing a flux guide over the first insulation layer and coupling to
8 the tunnel valve at the free layer;

9 covering the flux guide with a second insulation layer; and

10 forming a second shield layer over the second insulation, wherein the
11 flux guide and the free layer are physically isolated by the first and second insulation
12 layers to prevent current shunts therefrom.

1 2. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1 wherein the depositing the first
2 insulation layer over the first shield layer and around the tunnel valve is performed
3 using a self-aligning process wherein regions of different thicknesses are formed with
4 a single masking step.

1 3. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1 wherein the flux guide is
2 physically connected to the free layer of the tunnel valve.

1 4. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1 wherein the covering the flux
2 guide with a second insulation layer is performed using a self-aligning process
3 wherein regions of different thicknesses are formed with a single masking step.

1 5. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1 wherein the flux guide increases
2 the amount of magnetic flux in the tunnel valve.

1 6. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1 wherein the increase in the
2 amount of magnetic flux in the tunnel valve enhances the output signal to the tunnel
3 valve.

1 7. (withdrawn) The method of claim 1 wherein the forming a tunnel
2 valve at a first shield layer further comprises:

3 forming an antiferromagnetic (AFM) layer of electrically insulating
4 antiferromagnetic material;

5 depositing a pinned layer of ferromagnetic material in contact with
6 said AFM layer, said pinned layer making electrical contact with said first shield;

7 forming a free layer of ferromagnetic material; and

8 forming a tunnel junction layer of electrically insulating material
9 between said pinned and free layers.

1 8. (currently amended) A tunnel valve sensor, comprising:

2 a tunnel valve disposed at a first shield layer, the tunnel valve
3 comprising a free layer distal to the first shield layer;

4 a first insulation layer formed over the first shield layer and around the
5 tunnel valve;

6 a flux guide deposited over the first insulation layer, the flux guide
7 being coupled to the tunnel valve at the free layer;

8 a second insulation layer covering the flux guide; and

9 a second shield layer deposited over the second insulation, wherein the
10 flux guide and the free layer are physically connected, and the flux guide is physically
11 isolated from the first and second shield layers by the first and second insulation
12 layers to prevent current shunts therefrom.

1 9. (canceled) The tunnel valve sensor of claim 8 wherein the flux guide
2 is physically connected to the free layer of the tunnel valve.

1 10. (original) The tunnel valve sensor of claim 8 wherein the flux guide
2 increases the amount of magnetic flux in the tunnel valve.

1 11. (currently amended) The tunnel valve sensor of claim [[8]] 10 wherein
2 the increase in the amount of magnetic flux in the tunnel valve enhances the ~~output~~
3 output signal [[fo]] of the tunnel valve.

1 12. (currently amended) The tunnel valve sensor of claim [[7]] 8 wherein
2 the tunnel valve further comprises:

3 an antiferromagnetic (AFM) layer of electrically insulating
4 antiferromagnetic material;

5 a pinned layer of ferromagnetic material in contact with said AFM
6 layer, said pinned layer making electrical contact with said first shield;

7 a free layer of ferromagnetic material; and

8 a tunnel junction layer of electrically insulating material disposed
9 between said pinned and free layers.

1 13. (currently amended) A magnetic storage system, comprising:
2 a magnetic recording medium;
3 a tunnel valve sensor disposed proximate the recording medium, the
4 tunnel ~~valve~~ valve sensor, comprising
5 a tunnel valve disposed at a first shield layer, the tunnel valve
6 comprising a free layer distal to the first shield layer;
7 a first insulation layer formed over the first shield layer and
8 around the tunnel valve;
9 a flux guide deposited over the first insulation layer, the flux
10 guide being coupled to the tunnel valve at the free layer;
11 a second insulation layer covering the flux guide; and
12 a second shield layer deposited over the second insulation,
13 wherein the flux guide and the free layer are physically connected, and the flux guide
14 is physically isolated from the first and second shield layers by the first and second
15 insulation layers to prevent current shunts therefrom;[[.]]
16 an actuator for moving the tunnel valve sensor across the magnetic
17 recording disk so the tunnel valve sensor may access different regions of magnetically
18 recorded data on the magnetic recording medium; and
19 a data channel coupled electrically to the tunnel valve sensor for
20 detecting changes in resistance of the tunnel valve sensor caused by rotation of the
21 magnetization axis of the free ferromagnetic layer relative to the fixed magnetization
22 of the pinned layer in response to magnetic fields from the magnetically recorded
23 data.

1 14. (canceled) The magnetic storage system of claim 13 wherein the flux
2 guide is physically connected to the free layer of the tunnel valve.

1 15. (original) The magnetic storage system of claim 13 wherein the flux
2 guide increases the amount of magnetic flux in the tunnel valve.

1 16. (currently amended) The magnetic storage system of claim [[13]] 15
2 wherein the increase in the amount of magnetic flux in the tunnel valve enhances the
3 ~~output~~ output signal [[fo]] of the tunnel valve.

1 17. (original) The magnetic storage system of claim 13 wherein the tunnel
2 valve further comprises:

3 an antiferromagnetic (AFM) layer of electrically insulating
4 antiferromagnetic material;
5 a pinned layer of ferromagnetic material in contact with said AFM
6 layer, said pinned layer making electrical contact with said first shield;
7 a free layer of ferromagnetic material; and
8 a tunnel junction layer of electrically insulating material disposed
9 between said pinned and free layers.